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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the method comprising:

connecting the first client to a communications system host;

establishing an instant messaging communications session with the second client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

after establishing the instant messaging communications session, sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

if a user of the second client accepts the request, establishing, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel consists of a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transferring a file over the second communications channel~~direct connection~~.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications system host.

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3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the second client accepts the request based on indicated preferences of the second subscriber.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is initiated by the second client.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection to the second client is established using an IP address of the second client.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating that a direct connection to the second client is established.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant messaging host.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a data file.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a text file.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a video file.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

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14. (Currently Amended) A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the method comprising:

connecting the second client to a communications system host;

establishing an instant messaging communications session with the first client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

after establishing the instant messaging communications session, receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

enabling a user to accept the request from the first client;

establishing, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel consists of a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receiving a file over the second communications channeldirect connection.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications system host.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein accepting the request is based on indicated preferences of the second subscriber.

17. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising initiating the direct connection.

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18. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is established by the first client using an IP address of the second client.

19. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating that a direct connection to the first client is established.

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant messaging host.

21. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a data file.

22. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a text file.

23. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

24. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

25. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a video file.

26. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an indication that the first subscriber using the first client is composing a message.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, further comprising receiving the message composed by the first subscriber from the first client.

28. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

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29. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a first client configured to:

connect the first client to a communications system host;

establish an instant messaging communications session with the second client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

after establishing the instant messaging communications session, send, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

if a user of the second client accepts the request, establish, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel consists of a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transfer a file over the second communications channeldirect connection.

30. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a second client configured to:

connect the second client to a communications system host;

establish an instant messaging communications session with the first client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

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after establishing the instant messaging communications session, receive, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

enableenabling a user to accept the request from the first client;

establish, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel consists of a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receive a file over the second communications channeldirect connection.

31. (Currently Amended) A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions for:

connecting the first client to a communications system host;

establishing an instant messaging communications session with the second client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

after establishing the instant messaging communications session, sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to establish a direct connection to the second client;

if a user of the second client accepts the request, establishing, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel consists of a direct connection to the second client that bypasses the communications system host; and

transferring a file over the second communications channeldirect connection.

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32. (Currently Amended) The computer program~~method~~ of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

33. (Currently Amended) The computer program~~method~~ of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client device.

34. (Currently Amended) The computer program~~method~~ of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host device.

35. (Currently Amended) The computer program~~method~~ of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a propagated signal.

36. (Currently Amended) A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions for:

connecting the second client to a communications system host;

establishing an instant messaging communications session with the first client to enable instant messaging communications to be exchanged between the first client and the second client over a first communications channel, the first communications channel passing through the communications system host,

after establishing the instant messaging communications session, receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;

enabling a user to accept the request from the first client;

establishing, in the instant messaging communications session, a second communications channel between the first client and the second client to enable files to be directly transferred between the first client and the second client, wherein the second communications channel

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consists of a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and

receiving a file over the the second communications channeldirect connection.

37. (Currently Amended) The computer programmethod of claim 36 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

38. (Currently Amended) The computer programmethod of claim 36 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client device.

39. (Currently Amended) The computer programmethod of claim 36 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host device.

40. (Currently Amended) The computer programmethod of claim 36 wherein the computer readable medium is a propagated signal.

41-44. (Canceled)

45. (Currently Amended) A user interface configured to enable to acceptance or rejection of a file transfer from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the user interface comprising:

a first graphical user interface element structured and arranged to notify an operator of the second client of a request by the first client to establish a direct connection to the second client, the request being communicated to the second client by a communications system host after establishment of an instant messaging communications session with the first client and the direct connection bypassing the communications system host, the instant messaging communications session enabling instant messaging communications to be exchanged between

the first client and the second client over a first communications channel that passes through the communications system host; and

a second graphical user interface element structured and arranged to enable an operator of the second client to authorize the establishment of the direct connection and a file transfer over the direct connection in the instant messaging communications session.

46. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 45 wherein the first graphical user interface element is a dialog box.

47. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 45 wherein the second graphical user interface element includes a set of sub elements selectable by the recipient to authorize or reject establishment of the direct connection.

48. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements are option buttons.

49. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to authorize the direct connection.

50. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to reject the direct connection.

51. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to ignore the request.

52. (Previously Presented) The user interface of claim 47 wherein the sub elements include a sub element selectable to warn the first client not to send future requests for a direct connection to the second client.

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53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein connecting the first client to a communications system host includes connecting from the first client to the communications system host.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 wherein connecting the second client to a communications system host includes connecting from the second client to the communications system host.

55. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the first client is configured to connect to a communications system host by connecting from the first client to the communications system host.

56. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the second client is configured to connect to a communications system host by connecting from the second client to the communications system host.

57. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 31 wherein the instructions for connecting the first client to a communications system host include instructions for connecting from the first client to the communications system host.

58. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 36 wherein the instructions for connecting the second client to a communications system host include instructions for connecting from the second client to the communications system host.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising enabling the user to perceive the request and monitoring a response by the user to the request.

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60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 further comprising enabling the user to perceive the request and monitoring a response by the user to the request.

61. (Currently Amended) The apparatus~~method~~ of claim 29 wherein the first client is further configured to enable the user to perceive the request and to monitor a response by the user to the request.

62. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the second client is further configured to enable the user to perceive the request and to monitor a response by the user to the request.

63. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 31 further comprising instructions for enabling the user to perceive the request and monitoring a response by the user to the request.

64. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 36 further comprising instructions for enabling the user to perceive the request and monitoring a response by the user to the request.

65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 59, wherein enabling the user to perceive the request comprises enabling the request to be visually presented in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

66. (Previously presented) The method of claim 60, wherein enabling the user to perceive the request comprises enabling the request to be visually presented in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

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67. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 61, wherein the first client being configured to enable the user to perceive the request comprises the first client being configured to enable the second client to visually present the request in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

68. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 62, wherein the second client being configured to enable the user to perceive the request comprises the second client being configured to enable the request to be visually presented in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

69. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 63, wherein the instructions for enabling the user to perceive the request comprise instructions for enabling the second client to visually present the request in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

70. (Previously Presented) The computer program of claim 64, wherein the instructions for enabling the user to perceive the request comprise instructions for enabling the request to be visually presented in a graphical user interface to the user of the second client.

71. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending an instant message to the second client through the first communications channel during the instant messaging communications session.

72. (New) The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an instant message from the first client through the first communications channel during the instant messaging communications session.

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73. (New) The computer program of claim 31, further comprising instructions for sending an instant message to the second client through the first communications channel during the instant messaging communications session.

74. (New) The computer program of claim 36, further comprising instructions for receiving an instant message from the first client through the first communications channel during the instant messaging communications session.

75. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the user of the second client manually accepts the request.

76 (New) The method of claim 14, wherein enabling the user to accept the request comprises enabling the user to manually accept the request.

77. (New) The computer program of claim 31, wherein the user of the second client manually accepts the request.

78. (New) The computer program of claim 36, wherein the instructions for enabling the user to accept the request from the first client comprise instructions for enabling the user to manually accept the request from the first client.